

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 FEAE-00 INT-05 SIL-01 LAB-04

COME-00 IO-10 OPR-01 A-01 SY-04 AGR-05 SP-02 AID-05

EB-07 NSC-05 CIEP-01 TRSE-00 SS-15 STR-01 OMB-01

CEA-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00

PA-01 PRS-01 USIA-06 SAM-01 /102 W

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7413

INFO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT OF SPAIN 0394

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB PINS ENRG TD

SUBJECT: CONFRONTATION IN TEXACO LABOR NEGOTIATIONS POSTPONED BY
UNION

REF: A) POS 382; B) POS 378; C) POS 375

1. SUMMARY: A CONFRONTATION BETWEEN TEXACO TRINIDAD AND THE OIL-FIELD WORKERS TRADE UNION (OWTU) WAS AT LEAST TEMPORARILY AVERTED YESTERDAY WHEN THE UNION GAVE THE COMPANY ANOTHER WEEK TO SETTLE ON THE TERMS OF A NEW THREE-YEAR CONTRACT. THIS DECISION WAS ANNOUNCED AT A MASS RALLY OF OIL AND SUGAR WORKERS AND CANE FARMERS--ITSELF AN UNPRECEDENTED EVENT--IN SAN FERNANDO ON FEBRUARY 18 HELD UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE NEWLY-FORMED UNITED LABOUR FRONT (ULF). OWTU PRESIDENT-GENERAL GEORGE WEEKES TOLD THE MEETING THAT IF THE NEGOTIATIONS WERE NOT CONCLUDED BY THE DEADLINE, THE UNION WOULD RAISE ITS DEMAND FOR A WAGE INCREASE TO 147 PERCENT AND INDICATED HE MIGHT THEN ORGANIZE A MARCH ON THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE IN PORT OF SPAIN. END SUMMARY.

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2. DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE ERROL MAHABIR HAS REMAINED IN TRINIDAD (REF B). WE HAVE RECEIVED NO INDICATION THAT HE STILL MAY JOIN PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS IN THE U.S. AS ORIGINALLY PLANNED.

3. THE ABSENCE OF OIL AND SUGAR WORKERS FROM THEIR JOBS TO ATTEND THE RALLY FORCED CARONI TO STOP ALL OF ITS OPERATIONS AND, AS REPORTED IN REF A, TEXACO SHUT DOWN VIRTUALLY ALL OF ITS REFINERY PLANTS AND OTHER OPERATIONS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY YESTERDAY. ACCORDING TO A TEXACO OFFICIAL, THE WORKERS REPORTED BACK TO WORK BEGINNING WITH THE NIGHT SHIFT LAST NIGHT BUT DECISIONS ON RESTARTING OPERATIONS WILL BE MADE ON A PLANT BY PLANT BASIS AND WILL DEPEND LARGELY ON THE EFFICIENCY OF HARBOR OPERATIONS. THE GO-SLOW IN THE COMPANY'S MARINE DIVISION, WHICH HAS SERIOUSLY AFFECTED THE RECEIPT OF CRUDE AND THE SHIPPING OUT OF PRODUCT SINCE IT WAS PUT INTO EFFECT BY THE UNION IN DECEMBER, HAD FORCED TEXACO TO CUT DRASTICALLY THE THROUGHPUT OF THE REFINERY BEFORE YESTERDAY'S STOPPAGE. WE HAVE LEARNED THAT TEXACO'S STORAGE FACILITIES FOR PRODUCT ARE NOW NEARLY FULLY AND THE COMPANY HAS ASKED THE U.S. NAVY TO SEND A 200,000 TON TANKER TO PICK UP A LARGE QUANTITY OF JET FUEL TO RELIEVE THE PRESSURE. THE NAVY AGREED TO DO SO AFTER RECEIVING ASSURANCES FROM TEXACO THAT THE SHIP WOULD BE LOADED AND ALLOWED TO DEPART EXPEDITIOUSLY. (HOWEVER, FEBRUARY 24 IS THE EARLIEST THAT THE TANKER COULD ARRIVE.)

4. ATTENDANCE AT THE ALL-DAY ULF RALLY BY A CROWD VARIOUSLY ESTIMATED AT BETWEEN 15 AND 30,000 PROVIDED AN UNPRECEDENTED SHOW OF SOLIDARITY BETWEEN THE PREDOMINANTLY BLACK OIL WORKERS AND THE LARGELY EAST INDIAN SUGAR WORKERS AND CANE FARMERS AND PROVIDED DRAMATIC SUPPORT FOR THE CLAIM OF THE ULF TO REPRESENT A SUBSTANTIAL UNITED BLOC OF EAST INDIAN AND BLACK WORKERS IN THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT INDUSTRIES IN TRINIDAD. THE PRESENT MEMBERS OF THE ULF: THE OWTU, THE ALL TRINIDAD SUGAR ESTATES AND FACTORY WORKERS TRADE UNION (ALL TRINIDAD), THE ISLANDWIDE CANE FARMERS TRADE UNION (ICFTU), THE TRANSPORT AND INDUSTRIAL WORKERS UNION (TIWU) AND THE WEST INDIES GROUP OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS (WIGUT), HAVE A TOTAL MEMBERSHIP OF ABOUT 35,000 AND INCLUDE THE MOST RADICAL ELEMENTS IN THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO LABOR MOVEMENT. RECOGNIZING THE OBVIOUS THREAT WHICH THE ULF POSES FOR THE PNM GOVERNMENT OF

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TRINIDAD, MOST OF THE SPEAKERS DWELT AT SOME LENGTH ON THE POSSIBILITY THAT A STATE OF EMERGENCY WOULD BE DECLARED AND THAT THEY

WOULD BE IMPRISONED. THEY SOLICITED AND RECEIVED ASSURANCES FROM THEIR MEMBERS AT THE MEETING THAT, UNLIKE PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES, THE UNIONS WOULD GO ON STRIKE IF ANY OF THEIR LEADERS WERE IMPRISONED BY THE GOVERNMENT. THE SPEECHES CONTAINED THE USUAL DENUNCIATIONS OF PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS AND HIS PNM

GOVERNMENT AS WELL AS NUMEROUS ATTACKS ON MULTINATIONAL CORVHRA-
TIONS, PARTICULARLY THOSE LIKE KAISER WHICH HAVE EXPRESSED AN
INTEREST IN PARTICIPATING IN THE PRODUCTION OF FOOD AND
FERTILIZER IN TRINIDAD.

5. COMMENT: THE MOST REMARKABLE THING ABOUT THE MEETING WAS
NOT WHAT WAS SAID BUT THAT IT TOOK PLACE AT ALL. DESPITE ALL
OF THE TALK ABOUT AMITY BETWEEN THE RACES IN TRINIDAD, LARGE
GROUPS OF EAST INDIANS AND BLACKS HAD NOT, BEFORE THIS MEETING,
SAT DOWN TOGETHER AND AGREED TO WORK FOR COMMON ECONOMIC AND
POLITICAL GOALS. WHILE ITS BEGINNING WAS AUSPICIOUS AND
WITHOUT INCIDENT, IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN, OF COURSE, HOW WELL
THIS NEW COALITION WILL BE ABLE TO "HOLD THE STRAIN." IN THE
FUTURE THE ULF WILL UNDOUBTEDLY FACE SEVERE INTERNAL
CONFLICTS DUE TO THE STRONG EGOS OF THE FOUR PRINCIPAL LEADERS--
WEEKES, SHAH, PANDAY, AND YOUNG--AND TO POLICY DIFFERENCES
ARISING FROM THE ILL-DEFINED AND OFTEN CONFLICTING IDEOLOGIES
OF THE FOUR MEN AND THEIR MEMBERS. THERE WILL ALSO REMAIN THE
PROFOUND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO RACIAL GROUPS,
DIFFERENCES WHICH WERE VIVIDLY DEMONSTRATED BY THE BETWEEN-THE-
SPEAKERS ENTERTAINMENT--AN EAST INDIAN SINGER AND A STEEL BAND
PLAYING CALYPSOS--AND THE NUMBER OF TIMES THE CHAIRMAN MADE
REMARKES DIRECTED AT THE BLACK MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE TO RESPECT
THE EAST INDIAN SINGER. THE MOOD OF THE AUDIENCE WAS
SERIOUS AND RESPONSIVE ON QUESTIONS OF DIRECT ECONOMIC OR EMOTIONAL
CONCERN TO IT; WHEN THE SPEAKER DRIFTED OFF INTO VAGUE, IDEOLOGICAL
DENUNCIATIONS OF MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS OF FOREIGNERS,
HOWEVER, THE AUDIENCE REVERTED TO PASSIVITY.
RICH

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